

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

June 8, 2017

Michigan Technological University
Memorial Union Building, Ballroom A
Houghton, MI 49931

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

John Matonich, chair
J.R. Richardson, vice chair
Christine Crumbaugh
Louise Klarr

Present for DNR staff

Keith Creagh, DNR director
Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy
Trevor VanDyke, DNR legislative/legal director
Brooke Parmalee, DNR legal staff
Stacy Welling Haughey, UP coordinator
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

Present via Conference Call

Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman John Matonich called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3:39 p.m.

He was joined by Hancock city manager **Glenn Anderson** who welcomed the group to the Houghton/Hancock area.

Parks and Trails Update Parks and Recreation division (PRD) chief **Ron Olson** provided an update on Parks numbers; lodging and camping are up 19% from 2016, harbor nights are up 24%, on memorial weekend the state's parks were 94% occupied, recreation passports are at 34% participation, ORV licenses are up 7% and trail permits are up 10.7%. Snowmobile permits are down 6%. The Detroit Grand Prix was held June 2-4 on Belle Isle with crowds of over 100,000 people. June 3 was National Trails Day which had 90 scout groups marking the occasion by hiking various portions of the Iron Belle trail. **Olson** talked about the Grand Traverse harbor dredging, noting that the division is waiting on selection of a contractor. **Olson** also shared park highlights of Upper Peninsula (UP) parks. He concluded by sharing that the Michigan State Waterways Commission would meet the following day in Escanaba.

Lifesaving Award Law Enforcement division chief **Gary Hagler** and assistant chief **Dean Molnar** presented a lifesaving award to Conservation Officer **Patrick Hartsig**. **Hagler** thanked **Patrick's** family for supporting his position as a conservation officer. Due to **Hartsig's** quick response, training, and knowledge of his work area, he was able to save a ten year old child

from tragedy in the blustery February UP winter. The child was returned home safely and unharmed.

Wolf Litigation Update Legal/Legislative/Tribal director **Trevor VanDyke** provided the current status of the wolf litigation. Wolves in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota remain on the endangered species list. The state has joined legal arguments for returning wolves to state management. In March, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia took wolves in Wyoming off the list. Michigan's case isn't the same as Wyoming's, so it is hard to determine when the court will rule on the status of wolves in Michigan.

Legislative Report **VanDyke** provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report, **VanDyke** provided updates on recent legislative highlights, which also included the conference report on the department's budget.

Committee Reports:

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries – Commissioner Richardson shared that the committee received reports on muskellunge adaptive management, the UP brook trout regulations and study, antlerless deer quotas along with survey results from the 2016 deer hunting seasons. They also heard presentations on white-nose syndrome in bats, the moose survey, UP Habitat Workgroup and an update from the UP CWD Task Force.

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee - Commissioner Klarr provided a summary of the day's earlier meeting which included updates from the finance subcommittee, Public Act 288, trails and the PRD strategic plan.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling-Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 4:08 p.m.)

Marcy Cella came before the commission to inform them that she supports the ten brook trout regulations for area rivers and streams with the exception that streams with easy access or heavy population be excluded.

Mike Holmes, Michigan Darkhouse Angling Association requested that the commission reopen the through-the-ice fishing for Muskellunge on Lake St. Clair. On a trial basis they request that the season is open February 1 through February 7 to spearing.

George Lindquist talked about deer regulations and shared a report from DJ Case on understanding the barriers to hunter retention in Michigan. He would like the commission to look at that report which indicates there would be more hunters if the state passed antler point restrictions. **Lindquist** added that something needs to be done with regard to wolf management in the state.

Mike Taylor spends over 150 days a year hunting and fishing and thinks that the ban on shooting antlerless deer during archery season needs to continue.

Bill Leder, president of the Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, stated that the mission of the group is the conservation, protection and restoration of cold water fisheries and their watersheds. In March, the group sent a letter supporting the five brook trout limit and they feel

the preliminary results would support retaining the five brook trout bag limit, not a ten brook trout bag limit. **Leder** said the group will be following up on chief **Dexter's** report.

Benjamin Wood, vice president of Boundary Waters Musky Club is an avid musky angler. His group promotes catch and release and opposes muskellunge spearing. They are a family-friendly group and support promoting youth involvement. They are very excited about the expansion of the Thompson hatchery, adding that it will be good for the state. Boundary Waters support fisheries proposals for revised regulations for 2018. There is a strong support for musky catch and release year-around in the UP and a bag limit of one per year. **Wood** finished by stating that with the outbreak of VHS on Lake St. Clair, conservative regulations must be maintained.

Richard P. Smith asked commission to change deer regulations in the UP. Starting in 2017 he would like to see one unrestricted tag on combo deer licenses in the UP to better manage the herd. He doesn't believe the regulations in place since 2008 are working. On Drummond Island he would like to see mandatory antler point restrictions (APRs). He said that buck harvest regulations on the island are not working. **Smith** is opposed to one-buck bag limit on the island. He also stated that in the TB zone there needs to be more aggressive harvest regulations. He doesn't support mandatory APRs in the TB zone, they should be voluntary.

Jim Sweeney from Concerned Sportsmen of Michigan talked about deer management assistance permits (DMAPs); he would just like to see the sunset removed and the pilot program should go forward as established. In regard to mandatory APRs in TB zone, he thinks that the science is being ignored. This should not be social issue. The commission needs to be fully aware of all information before making a regulatory change. The public should expect that the laws are not made on socially-based agenda, but are science-based. **Sweeney** added that all other states that had APRs have removed them in the areas where there is disease prevalence. He wants the commission to be fully informed before making their decision.

Chauncey Moran informed the commission that a public hearing was being held at Westwood High School regarding discharge into the Escanaba River from the Humbolt. **Moran** talked about the land use agreement with the mining company that was transferred from Kennecott to Lundeen; there is a proposal to expand their operation which will increase what comes out of the ground, six times larger than the original agreement. **Moran** asked the commission and director to look more deeply into this.

Ed Beckley III from Tawas owns a store where baiting is his business. He said that baiting bans make hunters criminals because they are still baiting. **Beckley** asked that the commission not support a ban on baiting. He also said that he supports APRs in his area.

Casey Huckins, Michigan Technological University's (MTU) professor of Biological Services talked about the ten brook trout limit. He supports the process as outlined by chief **Dexter** but doesn't see the need to increase the bag limit. **Huckins** spoke of biological implications and said that the bag limit needs to be determined by the best available science. The regulation change is being proposed to get more people fishing.

Dick Pershinske, chair of the EUP Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) welcomed the commission to the UP and commended departmental staff that works with the CAC. There is trust and confidence working together. Now the CAC is taking a different tact, bringing up issues that are a concern to the group; habitat, CWD, social acceptability and responsibility of those who supply

baiting materials. **Pershinske** concluded by saying that the wolf issue is a concern and the group would like help make something happen.

John Ollila would like the brook trout bag limit set at five. If the commission votes for a ten brook trout bag limit, that limit should be state-wide.

W. Charles Kerfoot, a professor from MTU spoke on the stamp sands threat to Buffalo Reef and fish breeding grounds, and compromising recreational beaches. His research group recommends dredging of the trough and of the Traverse River. This should work for about three to five years. The estimated loss cost per year is \$1.7 million.

Kevin Codere also talked about the Gay stamp sands; he was representing Schoolcraft Township in Houghton County. **Codere** thanked the department for the emergency dredging that will be taking place this summer. He said that future dredging must include taking care of the materials dredged. He added that the estimated final solution could be in the area of \$21 million or more.

Jeff Ratcliffe executive director for Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance also shared his thoughts on Gay stamp sands and Buffalo Reef. He said that this is an old, but important issue with numerous impacts on the natural resources and it needs to be fixed. The Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance is willing to be the point of contact for putting a strategy into place to solve this issue.

Linda Rulison from southern Houghton County shared her experiences with wolves. She does not want a hunting season on wolves.

Larry Kangas wanted to hear about a change in a combo deer hunting tag. He would like to have one of the tags allow for taking an antlerless deer.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:23 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:24 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

FOR INFORMATION ONLY - NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Matonich reviewed the items up for information only.

Antlerless Deer License Quotas 2017-2019, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No.5 of 2017

Deer Management Assistance Permits and Antler Point Restrictions, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 6 of 2017 **Matonich** noted that there is an upcoming meeting on DMAPs with various stakeholder groups that will be reported on at the next meeting.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, May 11, 2017 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Crumbaugh made a motion that the minutes of the April 13, 2017 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Deer Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 of 2017

Commissioner Richardson moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No.4 of 2017, Deer Regulations be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, **Richardson** made a motion to amend Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 4 by striking "Iosco" and "Presque Isle" in section 3.100 (5) which will allow baiting in those counties. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the amendment. **Matonich** called for discussion; **Crumbaugh** added that it is very important that we continue to work with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). **Matonich** added that having consistency with MDARD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is important. **Matonich** called for a vote on the amendment only, that motion carried and amendment passed unanimously. **Matonich** called for discussion to the original motion, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Statewide Trout, Salmon, Whitefish, Lake Herring, and Smelt Regulations, Fisheries Order

Commissioner Richardson moved that Fisheries Order 200.17, Statewide Trout, Salmon, Whitefish, Lake Herring, and Smelt Regulations be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, **Richardson** made a motion to amend Fisheries Order 200.17 to remove the bag limit reduction from three fish to two fish daily proposed for Lake Huron management units MH1 and MH2, this motion maintains the bag limit in these two management units to three fish. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion, **Matonich** called for a vote on the amendment, a vote was taken and to motion for the amendment passed unanimously. A vote was taken on the original motion as amended and the motion passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Director Creagh listed the "director's action" items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Crumbaugh thanked MTU for welcoming the commission to the campus.

Commissioner Richardson commented that it was good to showcase our partnerships in the UP.

Commissioner Klarr enjoyed all the day's public comments, noting that habitat was a large topic of the day.

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Director Creagh thanked MTU for the hospitality. The director enjoyed to opportunity last night and this morning to meet with stakeholders.

Chairman Matonich thanked the staff of MTU for the hospitality, noting that it is great to be able to showcase items and issues that are unique to the UP.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, July 13, 2017 at the Lansing Center, 333 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing. The committees meeting that day will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries, and the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration.

Adjournment

Commissioner Klarr made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: _____

7/13/17



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director